

REMARKS

The Office Action dated December 5, 2003 has been carefully considered. It is first noted that a puzzling, and unfortunate, situation has arisen with regard to the numbering of the claims. In the Office Action, the Examiner indicates (at the top of page 2) that the claims have been renumbered as claims 60-118, rather than 62-120, because, according to the Examiner, the original application claims ended with claim 59, not claim 61. However, Applicants believe that they filed 61 claims with the original application. In this regard, the set of 61 claims originally filed are attached hereto as Exhibit A.

In the preliminary amendment filed on or about July 9, 2001 by Applicants' predecessor counsel, is believed to have correctly indicated that this application was filed with 61 claims when, in the preliminary amendment, it was requested that claims 2-61 be cancelled. Thus, in light of the set of 61 claims attached hereto as Exhibit A and the statement by predecessor counsel that claims 2-61 were being cancelled, it is believed that the Examiner is in error with regard to the claim numbering and it is respectfully requested that the claims be renumbered back to the numbers as set forth in the preliminary amendment filed by Applicants' predecessor counsel.

In this regard, to avoid the use of duplicate claim numbers, Applicants' present amendment which adds some new claims, commences the claim numbering with claim 121, i.e., picking up the claim numbering from claim 120 of the preliminary amendment, such that the newly-added claims are claims 121-143. Given the fact that many of the earlier and presently added claims are

dependent claims, it is, of course, crucially important that a proper claim numbering system be maintained in the present application and Applicants have attempted to do that.

The Examiner correctly noted that an Abstract had not been filed with the application as filed. An Abstract is submitted herewith.

With regard to the rejection and allowance of claims, Applicants will use both the claim numbering which they believe to be proper and will translate it into the Examiner's claim numbering system in the hope that clarity will be served by doing so. The Examiner allowed claims "77-80, 83, 89-106, 115, 116, and 118," which Applicants believe should be properly designated as claims 79-82, 85, 91-108, 117, 118, and 120 as those claims were numbered in the preliminary amendment. These claims remain in the form in which they were presented in the preliminary amendment.

The Examiner indicated claims "62, 65, 66, 68-76, 82, 85-88, 111 and 112" as being dependent on a rejected base claim, but as allowable if rewritten in independent form. These claims correlate to claims 64, 67, 68, 70-78, 84, 87-90, 113, and 114 as presented in the preliminary amendment. Each of these claims has been cancelled and have been written in independent form as claims 121-143.

The Examiner rejected claims "1, 60, 61, 63, 64, 67, 81, 84, 107, 108, 109, 110, 113, 114 and 117" over prior art. These claims as numbered in the preliminary amendment are claims 1, 62, 63, 65, 66, 69, 83, 86, 109, 110, 115, 116, and 119 as presented in the preliminary amendment. With the exception of claim 1, which has been amended, these claims have been cancelled.

Claim 1 has been amended as a vehicle for writing claims 64 and 67, which were indicated as being allowable, in independent form as claims 121 and 122. Furthermore, newly presented claim

124 corresponds to claim 70 written in independent form, newly presented claim 134 corresponds to claim 84 written in independent form, newly presented claim 135 corresponds to claim 87 written in independent form and newly presented claim 139 corresponds to claim 113 written in independent form.

Thus, independent of the claim renumbering, all of the claims now presented in this application are either claims which were allowed by the Examiner in the Office Action dated December 5, 2003, or claims which have been written in independent form to make them allowable. In this regard, Applicants reserves the right to present the rejected claims, which have now been cancelled, in a continuing application.

Given the fact that all of the claims now presented in this application have either been previously allowed or have been rewritten in independent form to render them allowable, there is no need to discuss the prior art. It is believed that this application is in condition for allowance and a favorable action is respectfully solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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